



Satellite image with enhanced low cloud-top temperatures (degrees C) for 7:15 a.m. EDT (NOAA)

### **Agricultural Weather Highlights - Wednesday - December 24, 2003**

- ***In the West***, stormy weather continues to slowly move inland across the ***Pacific Coast States***, particularly in ***northern and central California***. However, ***California***—with near-normal reservoir storage for this time of year—remains the only State from the ***Rockies westward*** reporting adequate water supplies.
- ***On the Plains***, mild, breezy weather prevails. These conditions are maintaining severe stress on pastures and winter wheat on the ***southern Plains*** and reducing topsoil moisture reserves on the ***central and northern Plains***, where the recent loss of snow cover has left winter grains exposed to potential weather extremes.
- ***In the Corn Belt***, rain and snow showers are diminishing across ***eastern portions of the region***, where soil moisture remains adequate to locally excessive for winter grains. In contrast, severe soil moisture shortages persist across parts of the ***western Corn Belt***, although agricultural effects are minimal this time of year.
- ***In the South***, cooler weather is returning in the wake of a cold front, which is sparking showers and thunderstorms throughout the ***East***. In the ***Southeast***, cool December weather has provided beneficial chill hours for peach trees and helped to force ***Florida's*** citrus trees in a semi-dormant state.

**Outlook:** Locally heavy rain will continue in ***New England*** through Christmas morning, threatening additional flooding from the combination of rainfall and rapid snow melt. Meanwhile, a new storm system is forecast to develop in the ***Southwest*** and move into the ***northern Plains*** by the weekend. This scenario would bring needed moisture from the ***Four Corners Region to eastern Montana and the Dakotas***, although dry weather would continue in the ***southern Plains***. A drying trend is expected for much of the ***East***, bringing some temporary relief from excessive wetness to the ***mid-Atlantic and New England***. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for December 29, 2003 - January 2, 2004, calls for a cold, unsettled weather pattern over the ***western half of the Nation***. Surplus precipitation will occur in the ***Midwest and Appalachians***, with drier-than-normal conditions in the ***southern Plains, Florida, and New England***. Mild weather will linger from the ***western and central Gulf northward into the Great Lakes region***.

**Contact:** Brad Rippey, Agricultural Meteorologist, USDA/OCE/WAOB, Washington, D.C. (202-720-2397)

**Web Site:** <http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/jawf/AgWxHighlights/TODAYSWX.PDF>